

Border and Transportation Security

Securing our nation's air, land, and sea borders is a difficult yet critical task. The United States has 5,525 miles of border with Canada and 1,989 miles with Mexico. Our maritime border includes 95,000 miles of shoreline, and a 3.4 million square mile exclusive economic zone. Each year, more than 500 million people cross the borders into the United States, some 330 million of whom are non-citizens.

The Department of Homeland Security would be responsible for securing our nation's borders and transportation systems, which straddle 350 official ports of entry and connect our homeland to the rest of the world. The tasks of managing our borders and securing our transportation systems are directly related – indeed, at our international airports and seaports they are inseparable.

The Department would manage who and what enters our homeland, and work to prevent the entry of terrorists and the instruments of terrorism while simultaneously ensuring the speedy flow of legitimate traffic. It would be the single federal Department in charge of all ports of entry, including security and inspection operations, and would manage and coordinate port of entry activities of other federal departments and agencies. The Department would lead efforts to create a border of the future that provides greater security through better intelligence, coordinated national efforts, and unprecedented international cooperation against terrorists, the instruments of terrorism, and other international threats. At the same time, it would help ensure that this border of the future better serves the needs of legitimate travelers and industry through improved efficiency.

The Department would lead work toward a state-of-the-art visa system, one in which visitors are identifiable by biometric information that is gathered during the visa application process. It would ensure that information is shared between databases of border management, law enforcement, and intelligence community agencies so that individuals who pose a threat to America are denied entry to the United States. It would also lead efforts to deploy an automated entry-exit system that would verify compliance with entry conditions, student status such as work limitations and duration of stay, for all categories of visas.

To carry out its border security mission the Department would incorporate the United States Customs Service (currently part of the Department of Treasury), the Immigration and Naturalization Service and Border Patrol (Department of Justice), the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (Department of Agriculture), and the Transportation Security Administration (Department of Transportation). The Department would also incorporate the Federal Protective Service (General Services Administration) to perform the additional function of protecting government buildings, a task closely related to the Department's infrastructure protection responsibilities.

The Department would secure our nation's transportation systems, which move people from our borders to anywhere in the country within hours. The recently created Transportation Security Administration, which would become part of the new Department, has statutory responsibility for security of all modes of transportation and directly employs airport security and law enforcement personnel. Tools it uses include intelligence, regulation, enforcement, inspection, and screening and education of carriers, passengers and shippers. Its present focus on aviation security will not slow the government's pace in addressing the security needs of other transportation modes. The incorporation of TSA into the new Department will allow the Department of Transportation to remain focused on its core mandate of ensuring that the nation has a robust and efficient transportation infrastructure that keeps pace with modern technology and the nation's demographic and economic growth.

United States Coast Guard. In order to secure our nation's territorial waters, including our ports and waterways, the Department would assume authority over the United States Coast Guard, which would maintain its existing independent identity as a military organization under the leadership of the

Commandant of the Coast Guard. Upon declaration of war or when the President so directs, the Coast Guard would operate as an element of the Department of Defense, consistent with existing law.

The U.S. Coast Guard is charged with regulatory, law enforcement, humanitarian, and emergency response duties. It is responsible for the safety and security of America's inland waterways, ports, and harbors; more than 95,000 miles of U.S. coastlines; U.S. territorial seas; 3.4 million square miles of ocean defining our Exclusive Economic Zones; as well as other maritime regions of importance to the United States.

The Coast Guard has command responsibilities for countering potential threats to America's coasts, ports, and inland waterways through numerous port security, harbor defense, and coastal warfare operations and exercises. In the name of port security specifically, the Coast Guard has broad authority in the nation's ports as "Captain of the Port." Recently the Coast Guard has worked to establish near shore and port domain awareness, and to provide an offshore force gathering intelligence and interdicting suspicious vessels prior to reaching U.S. shores.

Immigration and Visa Services. The new Department of Homeland Security would include the INS and would, consistent with the President's long-standing position, separate immigration services from immigration law enforcement. The Department would build an immigration services organization that would administer our immigration law in an efficient, fair, and humane manner. The new Department would assume the legal authority to issue visas to foreign nationals and admit them into the country. The State Department, working through the United States embassies and consulates abroad, would continue to administer the visa application and issuance process. The Department would make certain that America continues to welcome visitors and those who seek opportunity within our shores while excluding terrorists and their supporters.